

# Always Changing & Growing Up

**#LIKEAGIRL** Everything you need  
to know about puberty

**Grades 7-8**



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# From a Girl to a Woman

## What a trip!

You're a growing girl. Growing independent, growing strong and growing into a woman. Puberty isn't just the time when you get your period; it's when you learn to be a better leader, a better friend, and a better you.

Puberty can start as early as 7 years old for some girls or as late as 12 for others. It can be a really confusing time, as you might be wondering what's happening to you and why?

Don't worry! These changes are completely normal and natural, they happen to all of us.

The goal of this guide is to give you all the information you need to navigate puberty with confidence. It also shares helpful tips and advice from experts.

Simply read on to find out everything you've always wanted to know but never dared to ask.

Yours,

*The Always Team*

# Your Body is Changing

## Puberty

Puberty is a time of physical and emotional change that happens as children grow and mature. These changes are normal and everyone experiences them!

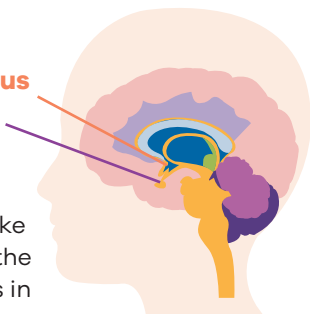
They usually start occurring earlier for girls (between the ages of 7 and 12), than they do for boys (between 9 and 14). But keep in mind, the time puberty kicks in is different for everyone. For some it happens early, while for others it can take longer. Your time is the right time!

## So, why do we all change?

Puberty simply exists to prepare the body for reproducing, so the human species can continue! During puberty, two parts of the brain called the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland start making a lot more hormones.

Hormones are chemical substances that act as messengers in the body and make changes happen. Some hormones will make your bones grow longer, others will guide the development of your brain or the changes in your reproductive system.

**Hypothalamus**  
**Pituitary Gland**



**Did you know?** Girls and boys produce all the same hormones, but in different levels. Boys have more testosterone and girls have more estrogen. That's one of the things that makes us different!

# Changes During Puberty

Now you know why changes occur, let's take a look at what changes children go through during puberty.

## Female

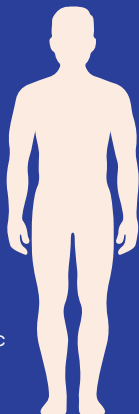
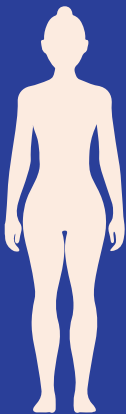
- Breasts start to grow
- Vaginal discharge begins
- Hips and thighs broaden
- Labia may change

## Male

- Breasts can grow
- Voice cracks and gets deeper
- Adam's apple enlarges
- Shoulders get larger and body gets more muscular
- Chest hair may appear
- Penis and testicles grow

## Shared

- Emotions and feelings may seem stronger
- Brain development improves the way you think and understand
- New feelings of attraction may begin
- You grow taller
- Skin gets oilier and pimples may appear
- Sweating increases, body develops own odour
- Body hair grows: face, armpit, leg and pubic



**These changes can be tough for many people, so it's great to support each other as best you can through this stage in life.**

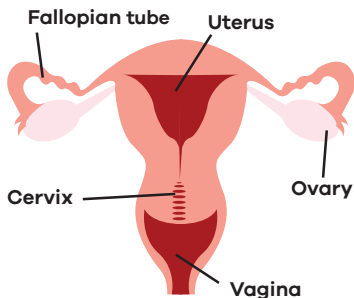
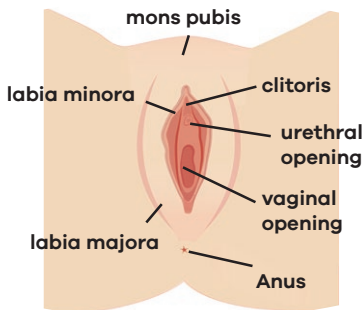
# Your Period

During puberty, girls start to produce more estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen causes your reproductive organs to grow, mature, and prepare to start your menstrual cycle. Every month, your body will prepare for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the lining of your uterus (endometrium) will shed and leave your body as a period.

Even if your body is now ready for pregnancy, it doesn't mean you are! It's important to know why you get your period and what is happening inside your body. There are many other external factors to be considered for pregnancy and these include age, readiness, and much more!

## Understanding your menstrual cycle

Your menstrual cycle is the time from the first day of bleeding in one cycle to the first day of bleeding in your next cycle. The average length of a menstrual cycle in the first few years is 21-45 days. After that, the normal length becomes 21-35 days, with the average length of a menstrual cycle being 28 days.

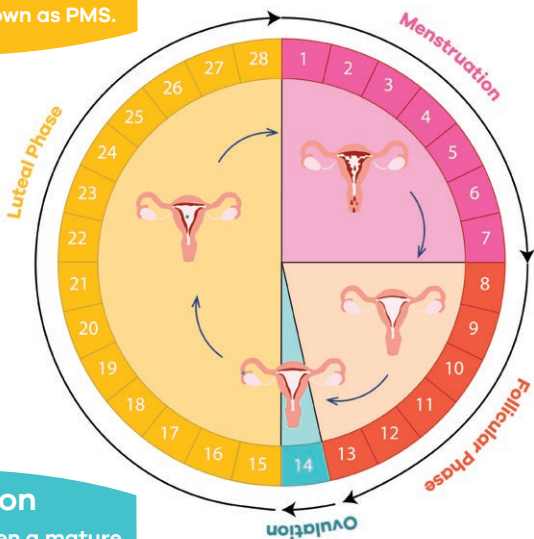


## 4 Pre-menstrual

The endometrium is thick and ready to receive a fertilized egg, but if fertilization does not happen, the lining is no longer needed. As a result, hormone levels change and the lining is shed. The hormones and shedding may cause symptoms known as PMS.

## 1 Menstruation

Your menstrual period, which is made of endometrial tissue, blood, and other fluids, exits the uterus through the cervix and vagina.



## 3 Ovulation

Ovulation occurs when a mature egg is released from the ovary.

The egg travels along the fallopian tube to the uterus. If a sperm fertilizes the egg, the cells can begin to form a pregnancy. Around the time of ovulation you may notice increased vaginal discharge.

## 2 Pre-ovulation

Each ovary holds thousands of eggs, and every month, rising hormones cause the ovary to produce a mature egg. During this time, estrogen causes the endometrium to get thicker.

# Period FAQs

## How long will my period last?

Well, it varies. For most girls and women, it usually lasts between 3 to 7 days.

## I haven't started my period, am I late?

There is no right time for your first period to come. You're most likely to get it between the ages of 10 and 16, but every girl is different. If you haven't started your period by 16, talk to a trusted adult or doctor.

## Why and how to keep track of my cycle

Everyone's menstrual cycle is unique. Keeping track of your cycle helps you understand how your body works and when your period will start. It can also be a big help for your doctor if you ever think there's a problem. Simply use a period calculator like the one on the Always website to keep track of your cycle.

## What if my period is irregular?

Many girls have unpredictable periods for the first few cycles. But, once you've had a few periods, they should all happen at least every 45 days, but no more often than every 21 days.

## What is spotting?

Spotting is light vaginal bleeding that happens between periods. If it happens around your usual period (before or after), it can be normal. If it's happening often or unpredictably, you should check with your doctor.






## How much blood will I shed?

The average female loses about 4 to 12 teaspoons of menstrual fluid during her period. But only a small amount of that is blood. Since your body contains 4 litres of blood on average, it doesn't miss the little bit lost during a period – and your body makes up for it quickly. The first few days of your period are likely to be the heaviest and the last few days will get lighter. Your period blood won't all come out at the same time.



# An overview of period protection

How do you deal with the menstrual fluid coming out of your vagina? There are lots of options. As you learn about them and try different things you'll be able to decide what works best for you.

Period Protection	Worn inside or outside the body	Disposable or Reusable
 <b>PADS</b>	Outside	Disposable
 <b>LINERS</b>	Outside	Disposable
 <b>TAMPONS</b>	Inside	Disposable
 <b>CUPS</b>	Inside	Reusable
 <b>MENSTRUAL UNDERWEAR</b>	Outside	Reusable

## Don't get caught by surprise

Before your cycle becomes regular, your period may happen unexpectedly. It's a really good idea to always be prepared- just in case- especially when you're at school, at camp or just out with friends.

### Below are some tips to make sure you're never caught off guard:

- Keep a pad or tampon in your **purse, backpack, locker** – or even just your pocket.
- Start **using a daily liner** a few days before your period is meant to start. It will help protect you by absorbing any spotting or light flow.
- If you get caught off guard, you can always use **rolled up toilet paper** until you can get a period protection.
- In case you don't have period protection on you, or simply can't afford it, you can always **ask your school counselor** or a trusted adult in your school to see if they have one available.

And look out for others - have a pad or tampon on hand in case a friend gets caught by surprise.

# All you need to know about pads

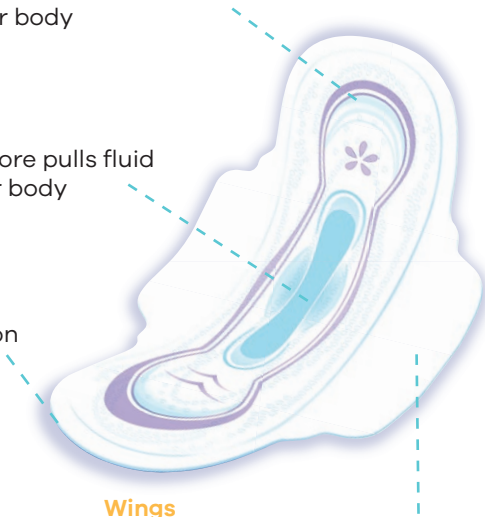
Most girls start with pads to manage their period, as they're really easy to use. A pad is a piece of absorbent material that you stick to the inside of your underwear to absorb your menstrual flow.

Each brand of pads looks different but they share many similar features. For instance, check out what an Always pad looks like below. Remember, on most pads, the longer or wider part of the pad usually goes to the back.

**Hey, that shape looks familiar**  
that's because its contoured  
to fit your body

**Where'd it go?**  
An absorbent core pulls fluid  
away from your body

**Adhesive**  
for stay-put protection



**Wings**  
Some pads have wings that wrap  
around underwear to help your pad  
stay in place and prevent from side  
leaks, enabling you to move freely

## How to use a pad



1. Wash hands with soap and water before changing your pad.



2. Open the wrapper of your pad.



3. Detach the pad from its wrapper and, if the pad has one, the paper strip that covers the wings.



4. Attach the sticky part securely to the inside centre of your underwear. Wrap the wings around it. When done, wash your hands with soap and water.



Change your pad every 4 to 8 hours, or more often if your flow is heavy. Don't forget to use clean underwear every day; change them if they become soiled.

## How to dispose of a pad

### Trash it – Don't flush it!



1. Fold the pad up & wrap it in the wrapper from your new pad, or in toilet paper if you don't have a wrapper available.

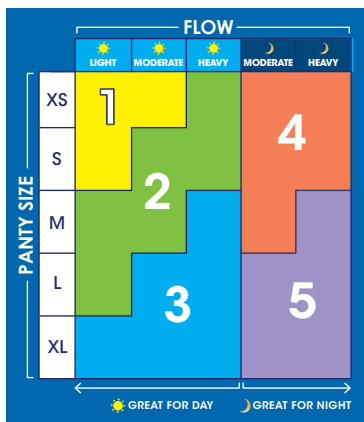


2. Put the wrapped up pad in the garbage and ensure the lid is closed once the product has been disposed.

## Choosing a pad

It is important to choose a pad that will be the best fit for you. Pads have different shapes, lengths and level of absorbencies so you can choose yours according to your shape and flow.

**The better it fits, the better it protects!**



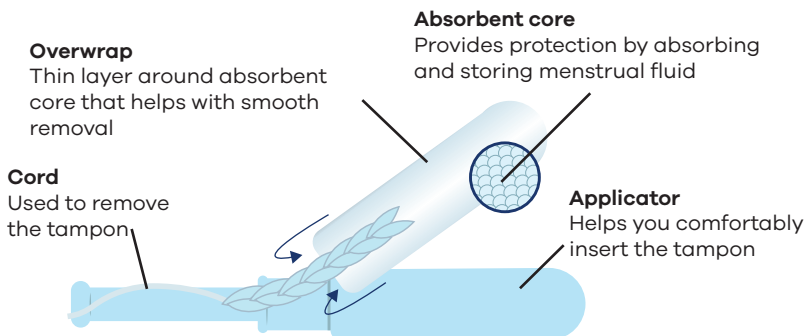
# All you need to know about tampons

A tampon is a type of period protection made from soft materials, that you insert in your vagina to soak up menstrual fluid before it leaves your body. Tampons can give you the protection and comfort you need to move freely, whether you're in class, on the field, or in the pool!

**Keep in mind:** Tampons go in your vagina (not your urethra). That means you can still pee while wearing a tampon, as the tampon does not go in the same hole as where your pee comes from!

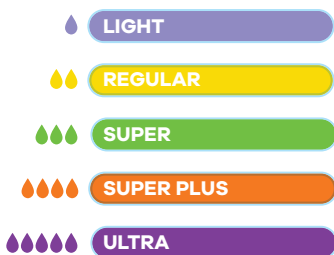


# Check out what a tampon looks like:



## Which absorbency to choose?

Tampons come in different levels of absorbencies because girls and women have different flows, that can change each day of their period!



We recommend you start with using a regular absorbency tampon. If you find it is difficult to remove your tampon after 4-8 hours and there are still white parts on your tampon when you remove it, try switching to a lower absorbency. If you find you're having to change it very frequently, try switching to a higher absorbency.

# You might be wondering...

## Can I use a tampon at night?

YES! Insert a new tampon before you go to bed and replace it immediately when you wake up. If you sleep for more than 8 hours, use a pad instead.

## Can I use tampons when I play sports or go swimming?

YES! Tampons will keep you protected through all your kicks, jumps, and dunks. And yes, you can even go swimming!

## Do tampons hurt?

You shouldn't feel a thing! If it's uncomfortable, you probably did not insert it far enough, which is an easy fix. Use your finger to push it in a little further, or gently pull it out and try inserting a new one.



## Are tampons easy to take out?

YES! The removal string is sewn on tight, so just pull it in order to remove the tampon and it will easily slip out! If you feel a strong resistance, the tampon might not be full yet. You might want to switch to a lower absorbent tampon for next time.

## Am I old enough to use tampons?

As soon as you start having your period, you're old enough to use tampons and your body is ready. Just make sure you feel ready and your parents are cool with it too.



## Do I need to wear a pad and a tampon?

No. Tampons are designed to work on their own. But while you're getting used to tampons, you can use a daily liner as well.

# How to use a Tampon

- 1**  Wash your hands well. Then unwrap the tampon. Find a comfy position. Most girls either sit on the toilet with their knees apart or stand with their knees slightly bent.
- 2**  Take a deep breath and relax. Hold the applicator securely.
- 3**  Find the little grip marks on the applicator. Hold them with your thumb and middle finger. With the string hanging down insert the plastic tube into your vagina at a slight upward angle. Gently slide the applicator inside your vagina until your fingers touch your body.
- 4**  With your pointer finger, push the smaller plastic tube all the way in; this slides the tampon out of the applicator and into the right place inside of you.
- 5**  To remove the applicator, keep your fingers on the grip marks and pull down gently, leaving the tampon inside you and the string hanging outside. If you got it right you should not even feel it! If it is uncomfortable, chances are it is not inserted far enough. Don't worry - either use your finger to push it in a little further, or gently pull it out and try again with a new tampon.
- 6**  Congrats, you got it! Now get rid of the applicator. Place it back into the wrapper and throw it in the bin, NOT the toilet. Wash your hands after inserting the tampon.
- 7**  To remove your tampon, gently pull the string of your tampon to remove it and dispose it in the bin. Once you're done, wash your hands with soap and water.

## Top tips!

- Change your tampon every 4-8 hours or more often if your flow is heavy.
- Ensure that the last tampon is removed at the end of your period.
- Set an alarm on your phone to help you remember when to change your tampon.



# Trash it – Don't flush it!

Too many people still believe tampons, wrappers or applicators can be flushed in the toilet. Good habits make a difference. You can contribute to the care for the environment by not flushing your period products and disposing them in the garbage instead.



## What's TSS?

TSS, or Toxic Shock Syndrome, is a rare but serious infection that can be fatal. It has been associated with tampon use. It is caused by a certain type of bacteria that may live on healthy skin, but become a problem if they grow too rapidly. It isn't just associated with tampon use, it may also occur in people who don't have periods.

**TSS is treatable, but the earlier you catch it the better.**

**Be aware of the warning signs:**

- Sudden high fever (usually over 39°C)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sunburn-like rash
- Dizziness
- Muscle ache
- Fainting/near fainting when standing

Remove your tampon and contact a doctor if you have one or more of the above warning signs.

**Although TSS is rare, here are a few ways to reduce your risk of getting it:**

- Use the lowest absorbency necessary for your flow
- Alternate between tampons and pads during your period
- Look out for the warning signs above





# Discharge & Daily Liners

## Discharge

You've probably noticed that your underwear sometimes gets stained with a creamy white/yellowish fluid. This discharge comes from your vagina and is **perfectly normal**. It is a sign that your body is functioning properly. It helps prevent the vagina from drying out and protects it from infections.

The amount of vaginal discharge can vary during the menstrual cycle as hormone levels in the body change. But if your discharge is significantly different than usual, has a bad smell or you experience itching in your vaginal area you should talk to a trusted adult and go see a doctor.

## Daily Liners

While vaginal discharge is normal and healthy, it might make you feel less fresh or uncomfortable. That's where a daily liner can help! It's an absorbent liner that you simply stick in the inside of your underwear. Unlike pads (which are designed to be used only during your period) daily liners are designed to be worn every day.

### Daily Liners are perfect for:

- Keeping your underwear clean
- Absorbing vaginal discharge
- Absorbing perspiration
- Extra protection when you're getting used to tampons
- Protection for light period days or spotting

### What do I do with it after it has been used?

To dispose of your daily liner, treat it like a used pad - wrap it up and then put it in the garbage. Never throw it in the toilet.

# Premenstrual Syndrome & Period cramps

## PMS

Between ovulation and the first day of your period, your hormone levels go up and down. These fluctuations can sometimes make you feel more emotional than normal and cause physical symptoms. These symptoms are usually called Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and are very normal.

### Common PMS symptoms you might experience:

- Feeling swollen or bloated
- Change in appetite
- Breast tenderness
- Abdominal cramps and feeling nauseous
- Acne or skin rash
- Mood changes: feeling sad, tearful, tired or irritable
- Headaches

### How to deal with PMS

- Chart your symptoms and be aware of when you may experience them
- Get enough rest
- Exercise
- Take time for yourself
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Eat foods rich in fibre and low in sugar and fat
- Listen to how you feel - don't feel bad if you want to curl up on the sofa instead of going out with your friends

## Period Cramps

Cramps can occur just before or during your period when the muscle of your uterus contracts to make the lining of your uterus leave your vagina as menstrual flow.

### How to treat them?

- Moderate exercise and stretching
- Use a hot water bottle or warm towel on your belly
- Take a warm bath
- Practice deep breathing exercises



# Staying healthy and confident

## Your brain is changing too!

While changes to your body are obvious, there's a lot of changes happening to your brain, too! You develop new, stronger emotions and these changes can affect your confidence. This is normal and there are supports available to help with these thoughts. Talk to a teacher, your doctor, a trusted family member or older friend.

## Build your brain power & embrace the growth mindset

Your brain is like a muscle, so you need to exercise it. When you take on challenges and practice until you overcome them, neurons in your brain create new and stronger connections. And when your brain gets stronger, your skills do too.

Check out the table below and start training your brain today!

Growth Mindset		Fixed Mindset	
CHALLENGING YOURSELF	Embrace challenges		Avoid opportunities
FACING CRITICISM	Learn from feedback		Ignore useful feedback
MAKING AN EFFORT	See effort as key to success		See effort as useless
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	A misstep is a step forward		A misstep is a reason to give up
WHEN OTHERS SUCCEED	Find inspiration in their performance		Feel threatened and upset

## Take risks and keep going

Remember – you only truly fail when you don't even try, so take positive risks. It can be scary, hard and, well, risky. It can also be exciting, fun and rewarding<sup>1</sup>!

### Here are a few tips to take positive risks:

- **Don't be afraid to fail!** If you fail, use it as an opportunity to learn, get stronger and keep going!
- **Try again, and again, and again.** Know that sometimes you have to keep practicing and trying new ways if you want to get better.
- **Remind yourself of all the things you've achieved** in the past. It can help you feel positive when you feel like you can't do something.
- **Break big things down** in to smaller, more manageable steps.
- **We all have strengths** – focus your attention on your strengths. It will help you become more confident and will give you energy!

*Keep Going #LikeAGirl!*

## Powerful words to help you out

A majority of girls believe words can harm<sup>2</sup>. The good news is that changing the words you use can change your world.

### Try these words:

**YET!** Yet is a very powerful word. You can use it to remind yourself that though you haven't accomplished it yet, you will<sup>3</sup>!

**AND.** When you praise yourself, it's easy to add "but" to lessen your success. Try using "and" instead. So instead of "I'm pretty good at geometry but I still have a B", try saying "and I am getting better every week"<sup>4</sup>.

**I CAN.** Have you ever said things like "I'm totally going to fail this test, I got so many questions wrong"? Turn the negative talk to more constructive thoughts like how you can study harder and do better next time.

1 Hill, Jess, Kathryn Bowers, Armistead Lemon, Elizabeth Baker, and Jennifer Jervis. "Growth Mindset and Confidence." Telephone interview. 20 Apr. 2015

2 Always 2014 Puberty & Confidence Survey. 2014. Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati. Online survey with 1,300 US females.

3 Hill, Jess, Kathryn Bowers, Armistead Lemon, Elizabeth Baker, and Jennifer Jervis. "Growth Mindset and Confidence." Telephone interview. 20 Apr. 2015

4 Simmons, Rachel, and Simone Marean. "Growth Mindset." Telephone interview. 9 Apr. 2015.

# Sex, Gender & Society

## Let's start with a few definitions:

**Biological sex:** Your biological sex is based on the genitals you're born with and the chromosomes you have. At birth, most people are either male or female.

**Gender identity:** This is about how you feel and how you think about yourself when it comes to gender. Gender is a continuum and there are many different ways of expressing your gender. And that's ok - everyone's identity is unique to them and should be respected.

**Gender roles:** As you grow up, and enter puberty, you've probably started to become more aware of what people around you think. You might have started to notice that people expect you to look, act or behave in a certain way just because you're a girl. We call this gender stereotyping and these are socially constructed - they relate to characteristics and behaviors that are typically thought to go alongside a person's biological sex.

## Don't let society limit you!

Your biological sex shouldn't define what you can or can't do - and stereotyping someone because of their gender, or thinking that someone is better or worse because of their gender, can be very harmful. Remember - you don't have to let these norms limit you. Girls can be strong, play whatever sports they want & speak up. Stay strong and believe that you can achieve anything!

## You're great, just the way you are

We are all different and that's awesome. Imagine if we all looked the same - how boring would that be! There is no right or wrong way to look, so try to focus on staying healthy and happy, be proud of your uniqueness and be supportive of those around you.





# Staying healthy



## Be active

Being physically active helps keep your body healthy & boost your energy levels! The key to enjoying it is to pick something you like – like walking outside, or playing with your friends & family.

## Sleep well

Getting enough sleep is an essential part of staying healthy and happy. On average you'll need between 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night. To help make sure you get enough sleep try to stick to a regular sleep schedule, avoid watching & using screens (e.g. TV, phone) for one hour before going to bed, and exercise daily.

## Eat well

Growing like you do during puberty requires a lot of energy and most of it comes from the food you eat. Each meal you should aim for half your plate to be made up of fruits & vegetables, and the other half from grains & proteins.

## Visit the doctor

As you get older & start your period, you may want to start seeing a doctor that specializes in women's health (an OB-GYN). They can help you understand the changes you're going through and check everything is healthy. Talk to your parents or guardians about this.

## Stay safe

During puberty, you're going through so many changes that everything seems possible, and this is great. Just remember to stay safe too.

- **Understand the risks of drug use:** legal and illegal substances affect your body and brain, can cause serious long-term damage, and even be life-threatening.
- Be aware that **harassment and bullying exist** – if someone tries to harm or intimidate you – seek support from a trusted adult.

# Healthy Relationships

## Taking care of others around you

During puberty, everyone is going through changes that can be hard to deal with. Look out for others and share with a trusted adult if you're worried about any of your friends.

## Discovering new feelings

At this particular moment of your life when your body is producing a lot more of hormones, you will start to experience new feelings. Some of these feelings may cause you to be more curious about your sexuality and it's good to remember that this curiosity is totally normal.

### Personal intimacy

As these hormones can make people feel more curious about their new feelings, some may begin to explore private parts of their body, especially the genital area. This is not right or wrong, but it's personal and should be done in private.

### Intimate feelings towards others

You might also begin to see others as more than just friends, and start having new feelings and crushes. This is completely normal! Just remember to keep in mind that others may not feel the same as you, and it's important to respect other's personal choices.

## Using social media

While this can be a great way to connect with others, it can also have drawbacks. Follow these tips to use it safely:

- Be careful about what you share. What goes online stays there forever
- Don't feel pressured to do anything online
- Be aware that social media is not always real life
- Don't gossip online - things can spread easily

# Where To Get More Info

We've covered a lot in this guide, but you may want to know more.



[always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice](https://always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice) is full of information.



Don't be afraid to talk and ask questions to your friends, family and teachers!

At Always, we believe that every girl has the right to be able to manage her period with dignity and that no girl should have to miss school & the things she loves because of her period.

If your family is struggling to afford period products, if you're finding things overwhelming or are dealing with anxiety, speak to your teacher, your doctor, a trusted family member or older friend.

Now that you know how your body and brain work and have tips to stay healthy and confident, go out & enjoy this journey.

*You have limitless possibilities ahead of you!*

